

## Chapter 9. Secrets Underground



“What’s the library lady doing here?” Dwight’s voice blurted as soon as he saw her face.

Mrs. Norolla was standing now. Flaming pieces of curtain flew to the floor. Zigzagging trails of fire climbed the wallpaper. She flung open the French doors that led to the backyard and rushed outside.

Confused, the children followed her. Mrs. Norolla headed for the trash pit and retrieved another smoldering log. She held it high, then rushed to the far end of the house where everything was dark. With all her might, Mrs.

Norolla heaved the log through a window. She made four more trips to the trash pit, each time taking a log and throwing it through another dark window. Soon, flames were lapping behind a long row of shattered windows.

Mrs. Norolla returned to the French doors and glanced back at the burning house. Her eyes seemed to flicker with pride at the sight of her handiwork. Then she looked through the open doors at the first room she had set afire. It was burning brightly now. Again, she smiled. Thick black smoke was beginning to pour out of the doors, rising in the night sky.

Her smile suddenly evaporated.

She looked up at a window on the second floor. “Young Robert!” she cried out loud. “I almost forgot! I’ll get you!” She placed her hands

over her mouth so that she could breathe easier and hurried through the burning room to the hallway.

Luz, Dwight, and Max started to follow her, but Miss Moon was standing at the bottom of the stairs. She held up her hand, stopping them.

"You don't need to follow her," Miss Moon's voice said. "She's going to rescue my son."

"Do you know who she is?" Luz's voice replied anxiously.

"Yes, why?" Miss Moon said.

"Because we know her, too!" Max's voice told her. "She's like you. She's past and present."

"You know her?" Miss Moon asked. "Past and present?"

Luz nodded. "She's the librarian at our school."

"Librarian?" Miss Moon's voice repeated. "She was no librarian."

"Well, she's the library lady in our school," Dwight told her.

"And she's La Llorona!" Max's voice announced. "We figured it out."

"Yes!" Luz's voice exclaimed. "She doesn't even have hands. She wears gloves all the time!"

"You mean, she only has skeleton hands!" Dwight added. "Bony skeleton hands! And I shook hands with her, too. It was really gross!"

"I saw them through the office window," Luz said.

"Just a moment," Miss Moon's voice said, trying to sort through everything the children were saying. "Slow down a little. How do you know she's La Llorona?"

“Because she’s a ghost, and her last name is Norolla,” Max’s voice explained. “And that spells Llorona when you change the letters around.”

“Then her children are dead,” Miss Moon said, suddenly dumbstruck. The children’s mouths dropped open. “I didn’t know she’d become La Llorona.”

“She had children?” Luz asked.

“Twins,” Miss Moon’s voice said. “Boys. Richard and Edward were their names.”

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Just then, Mrs. Norolla appeared at the top of the stairs carrying a rolled-up blanket. She walked down the stairs carefully. As she passed the children, Luz could see young Robert’s face peeking through an opening in the blanket.

“My house!” young Robert was saying. “My house is burning!”

“Yes, don’t worry,” Mrs. Norolla was telling him. “It won’t be burning long.” Then she smiled.

Miss Moon turned away to avoid looking at the face of her son.

“Why won’t you look at him?” Luz’s voice asked before she could stop herself.

“It is very painful,” Miss Moon’s voice replied, “to see something you cannot do anything about. I have never traveled back to this night before. I couldn’t bear it.”

“Why did she want to burn your house down?” Max’s voice asked.

“Was she crazy or something?” Dwight asked. “Because she sure is crazy when she’s the library lady in our school.”

“Just remember,” Miss Moon’s voice said, bristling, “she is not a librarian. She was always jealous of me.”

“But how did you even know her?” Max asked.

“Was she a teacher?” Luz’s voice asked.

“No, she wasn’t a teacher,” Miss Moon’s voice replied. Then she stopped. “I will tell you about her. But let’s go outside. It’s too distracting to stay here.”

“Can we get hurt?” Max asked. He watched as flames began to flicker behind the staircase.

“No,” Miss Moon’s voice confirmed. “But come with me and I’ll show you a special place.”

Miss Moon led the children out the front door and down the front walk. Luz glanced toward the street and saw that a small crowd had gathered across from the house. A few people were wearing their nightclothes covered by overcoats. Everyone was staring at the fire.

“Where are we going?” Max’s voice asked.

“To my grotto,” Miss Moon told them.

“What’s that?” Dwight asked.

“My special little cave,” she replied.

Just then, she veered off the front walk and headed down a narrow brick path toward a small grove of mesquite trees. Miss Moon stopped, and the children gathered around her. In front of them was a formation of rock perhaps ten feet tall. The base of the rock had been carved out to form a little shelter just large enough for a wooden bench. Behind the rock, Luz could just see the top of the flames.

Miss Moon took a seat on the bench and beckoned to the children. “Sit around me now. This is my secret place where I would come to

be alone sometimes. When you sit in here, you feel as if you are in another world.”

Dwight and Max sat on each side of Miss Moon and gazed out at the bushes and trees that surrounded them. Luz sat on the ground at Miss Moon’s feet.

“Now,” Miss Moon’s voice said, “I’m going to tell you a story that will explain quite a few things about the woman that set the fire. Her name was Emma. She lived in Tombstone with her parents and younger sister, Anna. They didn’t have much money, but her father worked hard to put food on the table, and her mother worked hard, too, raising her two children and working whenever she could.

“Now Emma was a difficult child. Whatever her parents told her to do, she did just the opposite. If they asked her to help clean, she made things dirty. If they asked her to work, she would only play. If they asked her to make do with a smaller portion of food, she made sure that she ate more. That’s the kind of person Emma was.

“When she was eighteen and Anna was sixteen, their mother died and their father told them that they must work to earn their keep. He found them a job working for a wealthy family in Tombstone. The family agreed to take the two girls on for a year. Of course, as you might guess, Emma liked being in the rich family’s house because she loved looking at and touching all of the nice things. But she didn’t like being told what to do. Even when she did work, she wasn’t very good. On the other hand, Anna did everything she was told, and she did her best on every job.

“When the year ended, the family asked to keep Emma’s sister for another year, but they did not want Emma to work for them any longer. Just before they let her go, she met a young man who had a lot of money. He courted her for a time, and when he asked her to marry him, she accepted. Emma didn’t even invite her father and sister to the wedding because she was ashamed of them. She thought they would embarrass her husband.

“Once they were married, Emma didn’t waste any time putting his money to work. She made him build a nice house for her and then

she went about ordering just the right furnishings. After a year, she had a nice house, lots of expensive things, and even twin sons. Her husband traveled a lot, but whenever he came home he always brought her money. Her face lit up every time she saw him, because she knew his valise would be full of cash. After their sons were born, he would also bring the boys presents, but he seemed to forget about Emma. This made her very angry, not only with her husband but with her sons.

“One day the sheriff came to call unexpectedly. He told Emma that her husband was dead. He had been killed while robbing a train. Then he told her that her husband had been wanted as a train robber and bank robber for a long time. Needless to say, the money stopped coming in. The boys cried for their father, and she grew to dislike her sons even more.

“Everyone in Tombstone shunned her. Her father and sister had left town. She had no one to turn to, and she was stubborn enough that she wouldn’t have asked for help anyway. She sold all of her possessions and used the money to live on for awhile. Finally, when her money ran out, she decided to move to Phoenix, where there would be more opportunity. On the way, she stopped in Tucson where she left her sons with a distant cousin. She told the woman that she would be back as soon as she had a job and could care for them, but in her heart she knew she would never go back for them.

“She arrived in Phoenix without a dollar in her pocketbook. It didn’t take her long to make enquiries about employment. By the end of the first day she found her way to Robert Wisely’s orphanage.”

“Your husband had an orphanage?” Max’s voice asked.

“Yes, he had so many things: an orphanage, a museum, a library, the house. He had many irons in the fire, so to speak.” She stopped and listened to the crackle of the house burning behind them. “And he never thought he would lose it all like this, I am certain.”

“But why would he have an orphanage?” Dwight asked. “Isn’t that kind of weird?”

“There were many orphans then,” Miss Moon’s voice explained, “not always because they didn’t have parents. Some people simply couldn’t afford to take care of their children, and they would put them in an orphanage. At any rate, Emma secured a job and began to work there. She didn’t like children, but she was hungry. Within a few weeks, she set her sights on the director of the orphanage and planned to marry him. Of course, he didn’t know anything about her first marriage or her children, which is just the way she wanted it.

“In fact, no one knew anything about it—not even me, but of course I hadn’t even met Emma yet. That happened on the day that Emma came to Robert Wisely’s house looking for her husband. He had an office inside the house, and sometimes he worked there. She rang the front bell, and I happened to answer the door. Imagine my surprise when I saw Emma’s face. I hadn’t seen her in many years. You see, I am Emma’s younger sister, Anna Moon.”

Dwight almost fell off the bench. “You’re the library lady’s sister?”

Miss Moon nodded.

“But you’re like night and day,” Max’s voice commented.

“What happened?” Luz asked. “What’s she say?”

“I was shocked to see her. I knew nothing about her, and she knew nothing about me. I had left Tombstone years earlier when my employer decided to help pay for my schooling. I was educated as a librarian. I happened to meet Mr. Wisely shortly afterwards. He was opening a private library on Luna Drive, and he hired me to be in charge. Not long after that he asked me to become Mrs. Wisely. Emma and I had a good deal to talk about, but she hadn’t changed one bit. She was very jealous of my hard work and good fortune.”

“But what about her kids?” Luz asked.

“I don’t know what happened to them. As far as I know, Richard and Edward stayed with their cousin in Tucson, but now that you’ve told me that she became La Llorona, it makes me sick to think of what she might have done to those poor boys.”

“But you don’t know,” Luz’s voice argued. “Maybe there was a mistake. Maybe—”

She was interrupted by the clang of a bell. Luz jumped up and craned her neck. Through the bushes, she saw a small fire truck that looked more like a toy approaching the front of the house.

“It looks so weird,” Dwight said, as he joined her.

They watched as the crowd parted to make room for the truck. At the same time, Mrs. Norolla began to run up the front walk of the house. Her arms were empty now.

“What’s she doing?” Dwight asked.

“Let’s go see,” Max’s voice suggested.

The children hurried to the front of the house, followed by Miss Moon. There, they watched as Mrs. Norolla took a ring of keys from her pocket.

“What are those for?” Dwight asked.

She took one key and headed straight for the door to the Museum of the Four Winds. In seconds she had opened it. Then she turned and stepped across the foyer to the other door marked Private. She unlocked it and threw it open. As the winds from the four open doors converged in the foyer, they created a whirlwind of black smoke that seemed to flame the fire more. In the hallway of the house, the fire blazed brighter and stronger. A chandelier crashed to the marble floor.

Then Mrs. Norolla ran back outside. She bumped into three firefighters.

“What were you doing, Miss?” one of them said. “It’s dangerous in there.”

“I wanted to make sure that everyone had escaped,” she told him.

Another fireman ran up.

“Chief, there’s a man who says he must speak to you.”

The fire chief seemed puzzled. He turned and looked at the crowd on the other side of the gate. As he did, a very tall man in dark clothing pushed open the gate and strode toward the chief.

“Who’s he?” Luz’s voice asked Miss Moon. “He looks kind of familiar.”

“Oh, he’s the undertaker,” Miss Moon’s voice replied. “I don’t think you know him.” Then her voice chuckled. “No, that’s a bit of a fib, but I always thought he looked like an undertaker. In truth, he was Mr. Daggett. He was Emma’s husband.”

“He was Mrs. Norolla’s husband?” Luz said.

“The guy who ran the orphanage?” Max’s voice asked.

“Yes, and not a very pleasant man at all.”

The children were quiet then, and they could hear Mr. Daggett speaking to the fire chief.

“There’s a desk in the office,” he was saying. “I know Mr. Wisely would want you to save that desk. It’s very valuable.”

“Look at this house,” the fire chief exclaimed. “I can’t risk the lives of any of my men. Can’t you tell the place is burning down? We don’t have enough chemical to fight it, and the wells are dry.”

Luz watched Mr. Daggett carefully. He was at least a foot taller than the fire chief. He lowered his chin, glared into the chief’s eyes, and said, “I’m certain that Mr. Wisely would make it worth your while and worth the while of any of your men who helped save his desk. It’s in the office at the front of the house, to the right of the foyer. The fire doesn’t seem to have reached that room yet.”

The fire chief looked closely at that area of the house. “And just what is so special about this desk?” he asked.

Mr. Daggett leaned down and said in a low voice, “It’s full of jewels that are worth a fortune.”

The fire chief’s eyes widened. “All right,” he whispered. “I’ll have me a little look. If it’s safe, we’ll pull the desk out. But I won’t forget your promise.”

Then the chief called two of his men over.

“Come with me,” he told them. “We have to salvage a desk from the house.”

“Should we follow them?” Max’s voice asked.

“It’s just a desk,” Luz said. “We know they save it because the newspaper article said so. And anyway it’s in the basement of the library now, isn’t it?”

Then she glanced at Dwight to see what he thought.

But Dwight looked as if he had seen a ghost.

“Don’t—don’t you know who that is?” his voice asked, trembling.

“Who?” Luz asked.

“Him!” he said pointing at Mr. Daggett.

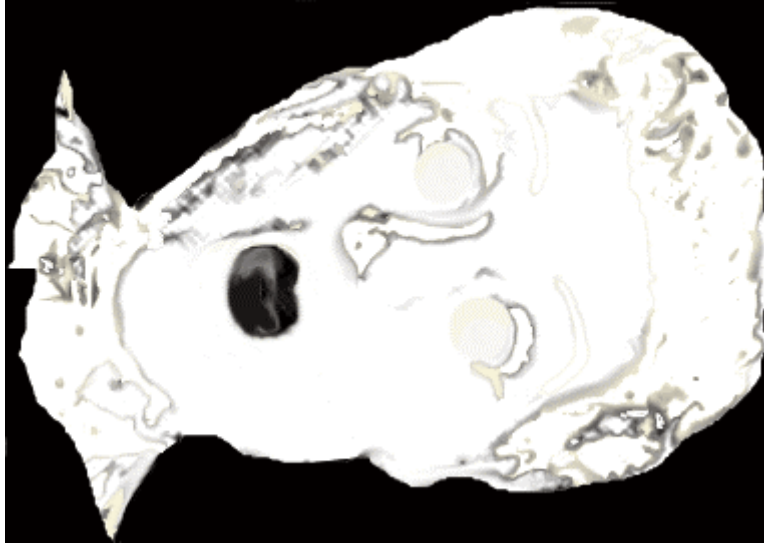
Mr. Daggett was standing outside the gate now, intently watching the firemen enter the house.

“He does look familiar,” Luz’s voice said, “but I’ve never been to 1924 before, so how would we—” She stopped. “Oh my gosh...now I know who he is!”

“Duh!” Dwight said.

“Who?” Max asked. “Who?”

“He’s the white ghost in my garage!” Dwight announced. “That’s who he is. I know what his face looks like. I could never forget it.”



Max looked at Miss Moon. “What would he be doing in Dwight’s garage?”

“I don’t know exactly,” Miss Moon’s voice said, “but that’s where he and Emma lived.”

“The library lady lived in my house?” Dwight’s voice said.

Then Luz asked, “Do you think he traveled forward in time and turned to stone?”

“I don’t know what happened to the man,” Miss Moon’s voice replied. “I didn’t like him when I was living at the same time as him, so I certainly haven’t made it my business to find out how his life ended. But if he was stone the last time you saw him, then I suspect that you’ve made an excellent deduction.”

“Hey, come on,” Dwight said. “I want to see the desk.”

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Miss Moon led them past the Private door, down a narrow hallway to a room that resembled an office. Smoke was blowing through the room, making it hard to see, but they could tell that the walls were lined with file cabinets and bookcases.

“This was the business office for the orphanage,” Miss Moon said.

“The orphanage was in the Wisely Mansion?” Dwight asked.

“No, it was in another building, a few blocks away,” Miss Moon explained.

“Hey, what does this mean?” Luz asked. She was inspecting a label on the front of one file cabinet. It read:



“My husband formed the Wisely Trust to help orphans,” Miss Moon’s voice said. “It was his charity. He used the money he made from his other businesses to help other people, especially orphans. I don’t think I mentioned that he himself was an orphan. There were so many orphanages in the country then, and he took it upon himself to find homes for orphans. Of course, the orphanages trusted him completely. He told them that he would take their hard-to-place children and find them loving homes.”

As she spoke, Dwight was watching the three firemen struggle to pick up Robert Wisely's desk.

"That's the same R.W. desk in the library basement," Dwight's voice told everyone. "I'd sure like to get my hands on some of the blue stones inside it, but I know I can't open it now," he said. Then he tried to push the small button below the keyhole. His hand moved right through the iron and wood. "Hey, I know," his voice said. "Maybe I can look inside."

As the firefighters lifted the desk, Dwight aimed his head toward the desk's top compartment and leaned through the wood. The men quickly began marching the desk toward the hallway and the foyer beyond. Dwight's head passed through the desk.

He hit his head with the palm of his hand. "Slight brain freeze," he said. "Anyway, it was too dark to see."

"I was in this room the night of the fire. I was beginning to have some questions about the placement of the orphans, so I began to look around. I looked through the files and then I discovered the room's secret," Miss Moon's voice said. "Take a look around you and tell me what you see."

The children peered through the smoke.

"Books," Max's voice said.

"File cabinets," Dwight said.

"And bookcases," Luz's voice added.

"No, look!" Dwight shouted. One bookcase on the other side of the room, barely visible through the smoke, stood at a slight angle. Dwight stepped closer and saw that it was more like a door. Behind it was the top rail of a circular staircase. Smoke funneled down the stairway somewhere below.

"I found the device that worked the secret staircase," Miss Moon's voice said. "Mr. Wisely loved mysteries. He was a very mysterious person. He was the one who invented the secret door for the elevator in the library."

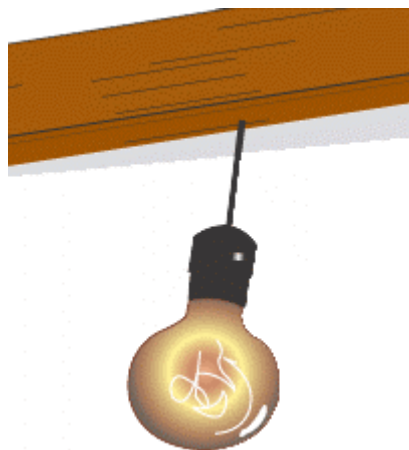
"Where do the stairs go?" Max's voice asked.

"Underground," Miss Moon told them. "Now follow me."

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The stairs were steep and narrow. The children had a hard time seeing, as smoke blew past them down the stairway. When they reached the bottom, they found themselves in a small area, no bigger than a closet. It was completely empty except for one thing. On one wall, near the floor, was a small round door, just like the one Dwight had found in the library. It stood open, and the smoke that spun down the staircase poured into the opening.

Max bent down and looked inside. He saw a tunnel carved out of dirt, lit by a string of old-fashioned electric bulbs. The cloud of smoke streamed through the tunnel to the other end.



"Where does this go?" Max asked.

“To the library,” Miss Moon said. “To the orphanage. To many places, I imagine. I found this door and the one in the library on the night of the fire. That’s what I was doing, trying to find some answers. That’s why I wanted you to see this. Maybe you will find some answers of your own.”

“But why are these tunnels here?” Luz asked.

“A thousand years ago the people who lived here built irrigation canals. Mr. Wisely found them and found a use for them, though he never told me. The tunnels follow the canals,” Miss Moon said. “Just hop into the tunnel. Go straight and never leave the main route. If you do, there could be danger.”

“What are you going to do?” Luz asked.

“I’m going to go back outside and wait. I have nothing else to do except watch this house burn to the ground.”

With that, she turned around and went back upstairs.

“Watch me!” Dwight’s voice yelled. Then he somersaulted into the tunnel. He landed beneath the first light bulb.

Luz started to duck her head and step carefully into the tunnel.

“No, silly,” Max’s voice said. He spun into the tunnel ahead of her.

“Okay!” she said and twirled her way into the tunnel. At first she couldn’t see. Then she realized that she needed to crouch a little or her head was in the dirt above the tunnel.

“I don’t like this place,” she told Max and Dwight. “The ceiling’s too low.”

Max stood up and put his head into the dirt that formed the ceiling. Then he crouched back down. “Stand up straight,” he urged. “It’s really fun.”

“Forget it,” Luz said.

“I don’t know what you two are doing, but I’m going to the library,” Dwight’s voice said.

He ran ahead. Max and Luz started to follow him, but Dwight was way ahead. Every time he came to one of the hanging light bulbs, he passed right through it. Max put his hand through the light bulbs. Luz was annoyed at the two of them and just walked slowly behind them.

Fifty yards down the tunnel, Dwight found himself at the intersection of another tunnel. He stopped and looked both ways as if the intersecting tunnel was a busy highway crowded with cars.

“What are you doing?” Max’s voice asked.

“Just looking.”

“You’re supposed to walk straight,” Luz’s voice reminded him.

“But why?” Dwight asked. “What could be dangerous? I just wonder what’s down this other tunnel. There might be something good.”

“Stop wondering so much,” Luz said.

“I can’t,” Dwight’s voice replied.

Full of energy and even more curiosity, Dwight ran on ahead. Max and Luz followed. They passed under four more light bulbs before they came to another intersection. As Dwight looked both ways down the new tunnel, Max and Luz passed him by.

They figured that he would follow in a moment.

“Hey!” Dwight called to them. “I see something shining in this tunnel.”

“Forget it,” Luz’s voice said, without turning around. “You heard what Miss Moon said. Let’s keep going. The smoke is getting worse and it’s hard to see.”

“But I want to see what it is,” Dwight’s voice argued. “It looks like a jewel.”

“Don’t—” Max started to say, but Dwight had already left the main tunnel.

He knew he had seen something sparkling, and he planned to get his hands on a precious gem, no matter what. As soon as he had it, he would turn around and get right back to the main tunnel.

The new tunnel was much darker; there were fewer lights and Dwight had to walk in partial darkness between them. When he reached the spot where he thought he had seen something, he found only a piece of tinfoil; the reflection of a light bulb had glinted off its surface. Annoyed at his bad luck, he didn’t want to give up. He squinted his eyes and looked further down the tunnel. He thought he saw something else shiny. At that moment, the lights began to flicker.



“Dwight?” Luz’s voice was calling. “Dwight?”

“Get back here!” Max’s voice yelled.

“I can’t see,” Dwight’s voice told them.

“We’re right here,” Luz said.

The lights flicked back on.

“Dwight!” Max called.

“I just have to get this—” Dwight told them. He would have run back to them, but he couldn’t resist the shiny object that he was certain would bring him a huge fortune. He hurried towards the shiny object. It would only take a few seconds and then he could rejoin his friends. But the lights went out again. This time they didn’t flicker back on.

Dwight stopped and tried to feel for the wall. Of course, now that he was traveling in time, he couldn’t feel anything except the colored stones in his pocket that bounced against his leg every time he took a step.

“Can you see anything?” his voice called to Luz and Max.

“Yes,” Luz’s voice replied. “There’s light at the other end of the main tunnel. Do you see it?”

Dwight’s tunnel was pitch black.

“No,” his voice said.

“Wait till the lights come back on,” Max’s voice said.

Dwight stood still. “Don’t be afraid,” he told himself silently. “The lights will come back on any second now.”

He inched forward in the darkness. He couldn’t give up on the shiny object further down the tunnel. He was going to find it.

Feeling quite brave, he took a few longer steps. Then he seemed to step into air. At first he didn’t realize what was happening. It was only when he landed—and bounced-- that he knew he had somehow fallen. He could tell that he wasn’t hurt.

Just then, the lights came on. He looked up and saw that he had fallen down a vertical shaft into a larger tunnel, further underground.

“Dwight!” he heard Luz’s voice call, but her voice was very faint.  
“Where are you?”

Her words echoed.

“I’m down here,” he called to Luz and Max, but he wasn’t sure they could hear him.

He thought about climbing out, but as soon as he tried to grab the earthen wall, his hand went right through it. Without a blue stone, he couldn’t escape the new tunnel, he realized. All he could do was follow the tunnel and hope that it led outside.

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The new tunnel was just like the other ones. It, too, was lit by large bulbs hanging from rafters. The only difference was that it seemed to slope upwards. He walked fast, hoping to find a way out. But in a few moments, he reached a dead end. A large black iron door blocked the tunnel.

Dwight took one look at the door and laughed. “I can walk right through you,” his voice told it.

He slowly pushed his way through the door and found himself in a dark earthen room, lit by a single bulb. Shovels and axes lined one wall. Wooden buckets were stacked in one corner. He wasn’t sure why they were there. Then he turned around and looked back at the iron door. Above it was a sign carved in a rafter:



**LOST DUTCHMAN MINE**

“A mine?” his voice questioned. “Beneath the Wisely Mansion? This is getting weirder.”

For a moment he imagined buckets full of sparkling jewels. Then he realized that he still needed to find a way out of the tunnel. He began to walk to the far end of the room, past the shovels and buckets. The earthen walls looked different there. As he got closer he saw that a stairway was carved out of the earth. He didn't waste any time. He charged up the stairs. Something covered the top, but he shoved his head through and continued climbing until he came out in a room.

It took him perhaps one second to realize where he was: the garage that was attached to his house. Only now, it wasn't a garage. There were horses and hay and saddles and even oil lanterns hanging from the rafters. He looked down at the floor to see where he had come from. The wooden floor covered the staircase, hiding it completely.

Immediately he thought of Max and Luz. They would want to see the underground room and how it connected to the Wisely Mansion. He wanted to walk back down the stairs to the underground room, but he couldn't. The floor was solid and wouldn't let him pass through it.

For a moment he wondered how he was going to meet Max and Luz. Then he knew. He would go to the Luna Drive Library and meet them in the tunnel. Then he could bring them back to the garage and explain everything that he had found.

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Dwight spun through the wall and stopped outside. He looked down the street and saw the crowd watching the fire.

“Miss Moon!” his voice called. He was running toward the burning house. “Miss Moon!”

Miss Moon heard him almost at once and turned her head, searching for him. She smiled as soon as she saw him.

"Where did you come from?" she asked.

"I went exploring," his voice told her. "I fell down into a deeper tunnel and I saw some things. I need to tell Max and Luz."

He watched as the front part of the house began to collapse. Showers of sparks flew up into the night sky.

"We can't go that way anymore," Miss Moon said. "But we can meet them in the basement of the library."

On the way to the library he told her all that he had discovered.

"It said the Lost Dutchman Mine," Dwight's voice told her. "Do you think it really is?"

"I don't know," Miss Moon replied. "It's not where most people have looked for the mine. Most people think it's off in the Superstition Mountains."

"Maybe it's where all the magic stones come from," Dwight's voice suggested excitedly. "Maybe there's a lot of gold down there, too."

"Perhaps," Miss Moon said.

When they reached the library, Miss Moon walked around the side of the building.

"Aren't we going in the front door?" Dwight's voice asked.

"The secret door only opens at four o'clock," Miss Moon said. "It's too hard to get to the basement through the elevator shaft. But Mr. Wisely had an easier way. Watch me."

She stopped by a gazebo covered with vines.

"There's a hidden stairway under the floor of this gazebo," she told Dwight. "The stairway leads to the basement. But it can only be used when you are traveling through time. Now watch me."

Miss Moon stood against the railing of the gazebo and began to walk toward the center. As she did, she began to sink into the floor, one step at a time until she had disappeared from sight down the stairway.

Dwight ran to the railing and tried to follow her, but he found himself walking across the floor of the gazebo not descending a staircase. He tried three times, without success.

Miss Moon's head emerged from the floor of the gazebo.

"Having trouble?" her voice asked.

"Yes!" he complained.

"When there's a secret stairway under a floor, you must imagine the stairs in your mind. When you can picture them, your feet will find the steps. Now try again."

Dwight returned to the railing. He looked straight on and pictured the staircase that went down in front of him. Then he began to walk.

"Picture the first step," Miss Moon's voice urged him.

As he did, his right foot went through the wooden floor.

"Picture the second step."

This time his left foot went through the floor, and suddenly he found himself traveling down a staircase beneath the gazebo.

"Now you've learned a new trick. You can teach it to Luz and Max, if you want," Miss Moon told him.

They reached the bottom of the stairs and began walking down a tunnel. Dwight could see light ahead of him. In a few moments, they reached the end of the tunnel.

"Spin," Miss Moon told him. "The basement is through that wall."

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They both spun through the wall. Dwight saw that he was standing between the wall and a large stone. He poked his head through the stone and saw the Memory Machine immediately. A cloud of smoke surrounded it. Then Dwight ran into the Employees Only room and saw that the round jeweled door was open. Smoke poured out of it into the basement. He bent down and leaned into the opening.

“Luz! Max! I’m in the library!” his voice called.

“What took you so long?” They were standing behind him on the other side of the room.

He smiled at the sight of them.

“You’ll never guess what I found,” he said. “I found another tunnel further underground. It’s under my garage, covered up by the floor. But Miss Moon showed me how to walk down hidden staircases. You’re going to want to see this. I think there’s a mine down there.”

“The smoke in here is terrible,” Luz said.

“I know,” Dwight said. “I’m surprised the library didn’t burn down, too.”

“If we could shut this door, it would be better,” Max said. “That way he could block the smoke.”

The smoke hung heavily from the ceiling. The only clear space seemed to be near the floor.

Miss Moon was standing at the door now. “I think you should come out here,” her voice told them.

They followed her to the Memory Machine.

“Wait,” she said. “Sit here. It’s just about time.”

They sat on the floor near the entrance to the machine.

In a few moments, the Memory Machine began to light up and the 1924 Miss Moon appeared. The machine was filled with heavy smoke. As soon as she appeared, the 1924 Miss Moon began to cough and choke from the noxious fumes. She quickly dropped to the floor of the machine.

Luz saw what was happening. "You can't breathe," her voice said.

Dwight and Max watched helplessly.

Desperately, the 1924 Miss Moon, unable to see through the dense smoke, fumbled with the dials on the floor of the machine. She seemed to turn a few dials, as she gasped for breath. Then she fell lifelessly over the dials. As she fell, her shoulder pressed the golden button. In a moment she had disappeared.

"That's why you went forward," Dwight said. "Because you couldn't breathe and you couldn't see."

"That must have been awful," Max said.

"I wasn't trying to go forward," Miss Moon told them. "It was just an accident."

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Suddenly, Luz felt quite strange. She felt the uncontrollable urge for a candy bar, and then she remembered the cavities that her dentist was waiting to fill that afternoon. She hadn't wanted a candy bar since...when? She knew: she hadn't craved a candy bar since school got out that afternoon, on her way to the library. Then Dwight looked around the smoky room and felt very afraid. He began to worry about how he would ever get back to the library in the present. And Max reached up to his hatless head and tried to pull down the brim of his missing cap.

"Max?" Luz said.

But Max couldn't answer.

"Something's wrong," Dwight said.

"It's time," Miss Moon said. "It's started again."

"How could that be?" Luz said.

"Maybe someone started it again," Max's voice suggested.

"But we're all here," Dwight said.

"All I know is that I've got to get back," Luz said. "I either have to turn off time again or get to the dentist. Tía Rosa is going to be really mad."

She took the blue stone from her pocket.

"Well, bring me back a blue stone, would you?" Dwight asked.

"I'll bring back as many as I can," Luz's voice told him. "I don't think we should ever run short."

With that, she opened her hand and looked at the blue stone she held. Then she threw it on the floor and disappeared.

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Luz had no sooner gone than Max removed the blue stone from his pocket. Without a word, he held it up, ready to drop it on the floor, when Dwight saw what he was about to do.

"Don't, Max, don't!" Dwight pleaded. "Stay here with me and miss Moon. Luz can take care of this."

But Max wasn't talking. He waved goodbye and dropped the stone.

Dwight was frantic. He looked at Miss Moon. "I don't want to be here," his voice told her.

"Be patient," she said. "They'll come back."

But he had pulled out the stones he had taken from Robert Wisely's desk. He quickly picked through them again to make sure that he hadn't overlooked another blue stone. All he saw were red and green stones.

"I don't know what these do," Dwight's voice was saying. "And I don't know what he do. Should I--?"

One of the red stones seemed to sparkle brightly. Dwight blinked. Could he be imagining the twinkle? The room was thick with smoke, and it was hard to see. Then the red stone sparkled again.

Dwight knew just what to do. He put the other stones back in his pocket and held tightly to the red stone that seemed to be speaking to him. Without another thought, he dropped the red stone to the floor and closed his eyes.

He waited, but nothing seemed to happen. Then he began to cough.

He opened his eyes then, but they began to sting from the smoke.

"I don't know what's wrong," he was telling Miss Moon. But when he looked, she was no longer there. "Miss Moon?" he asked. "Where are you? Are you hiding? This isn't funny. I can't breathe."

He was choking from the smoke.

He lay on the floor so that he could breathe better. He could look for Miss Moon this way. He would crawl through every row of row of file cabinets. He tried to push his head through the cabinet. *Thud!* He hit his head.

"What?" Dwight thought. "How'd I do that?"

He tried again to go through the cabinet, but his head clunked against the metal.

Now the truth was beginning to dawn on him. The red stone had changed him. He reached out and tried to put his hand through the cabinet. All he felt was warm metal. He traced the indentation where the drawer fit the cabinet. Then he coughed as he breathed in more smoke.

His mind was racing. The red stone had turned him from a ghost to a person. He was alive now. Maybe, he realized with a sense of dread, he was alive in 1924.

He was desperate to change everything back. He pulled a green stone from his pocket and threw it down. He still couldn't breathe, and he could feel the cabinet. He threw another red stone, then another, but no matter what he tried, there was no returning to his invisible ghostly self.

He knew he had to do something; he couldn't breathe smoke much longer.

"I've got to get out of here," he told himself.

He remembered the elevator. He pulled the collar of his shirt up to cover his mouth and made his way down the hallway to the elevator. His finger touched the UP button. The door opened.

As the elevator delivered him to the main floor of the Luna Drive Library, he had no idea what to expect when the door opened.

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**Want to find out what happens next?**

**Chapter 10 will appear online on August 1st.**

**In the meantime, you can crack this code to get a preview of  
Chapter 10:**

QUESTION: When Dwight finds himself living in 1924, who do people believe he is?

ANSWER: M DGZMIMK ADBTMZ

